

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method of enabling scheduling of a service call in a computing environment, the method comprising:

obtaining product information regarding a product from a user of the computing environment;

validating product warranty service information of the product in real-time from a database including warranty service information based on at least one of the product information and customer information obtained from the user;

establishing a priority order to a service call among a plurality of service calls based on the product warranty service information;

determining by a first computing unit including a web browser, whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer of the product or a service provider different than the manufacturer;

automatically providing to the user only references of service providers authorized to service or repair the product;

automatically providing to the user, from whom the product information is obtained, at least one available appointment based on the priority order within a calendar schedule in real-time for scheduling a service call with at least one of the manufacturer and the service provider based on the product information and on said determination made by the first computing unit without interaction between the user and any other human being, and enabling the user to select one available appointment in real-time for at least one service provider from the calendar schedule; and

automatically providing a service call price estimate that varies based on a regional location of the user, without interaction between the user and any other human being.

2. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the product information comprises a location of the product, and at least one of a product type, a product manufacturer, and a product model number, and wherein the at least one available appointment is based on the location of the product.

3. (canceled)

4. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the automatically providing comprises selecting the at least one available appointment from a plurality of appointments, and wherein the plurality of appointments are associated with a plurality of service providers at a plurality of locations; and providing to the user a preferred service provider.

5. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the automatically providing comprises determining in real-time the at least one available appointment.

6. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the automatically providing comprises updating in real-time the at least one available appointment as unavailable in the event another user has selected the at least one available appointment.

7. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing suggested product information to the user for use by the user in providing the product information.

8. (original) The method of claim 7, wherein the suggested product information comprises at least one of a product type, a product manufacturer, and a product model number.

9. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing to the user a suggested nature of a problem based on the product information

10. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising obtaining one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user.

11. (previously presented) The method of claim 10, further comprising notifying the service provider of the one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user.

12. (canceled)

13. (original) The method of claim 10, further comprising setting the one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user as unavailable for other users.

14. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising validating warranty coverage for the product based on the product information.

15. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising obtaining a nature of a problem of the product, and providing do-it-yourself repair information based on the nature of the problem.

16. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the obtaining comprises obtaining the product information at the first computing unit from input of the product information by the user at a second computing unit coupled to the first computing unit via a communications network.

17. (original) The method of claim 16, wherein the communications network is a global computer network.

18. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said service call is for repair of a home appliance, the authorized service provider further comprising at least one of at least one service provider under an agreement with the manufacturer to provide service similar to factory service coverage under warranty and at least one service provider satisfying requirements for becoming one authorized service provider for the product of claim 1, wherein said service call is for repair of a home appliance.

19. (currently amended) A method of enabling scheduling of a service call for repair of a home appliance in a computing environment, the method comprising:

obtaining product information regarding a product at a first computing unit from input of the product information by a user at a second computing unit coupled to the first computing unit via a communications network;

validating product warranty service information of the product in real-time from a database including warranty service information based on at least one of the product information and customer information obtained from the user;

establishing a priority order to a service call among a plurality of service calls by the first computing unit based on the product warranty service information;

determining, by the second computing unit including a web browser, whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer of the product or a service provider different than the manufacturer;

~~automatically providing to the user only references of service providers authorized to service or repair the product;~~

automatically providing from the first computing unit to the user that input the product information at the second computing unit at least one available appointment based on the priority order in real-time for scheduling a service call based on the product information and based on said determination made by the second computing unit, wherein said automatically providing includes providing without interaction between the user and any other human being, and said automatically providing includes providing based on a determination to display the at least one available appointment in real-time within a calendar schedule for scheduling the service call; and

automatically providing from the first computing unit to the user, prior to scheduling the service call, a price estimate that varies based on a regional location of the user for the service call without interaction between the user and any other human being.

20. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein the product information comprises a location of the product, and at least one of a product type, a product manufacturer, and a product model number, and wherein the at least one available appointment is based on the location of the product.

21. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein the automatically providing comprises selecting the at least one available appointment from a plurality of appointments, and wherein the plurality of appointments are associated with a plurality of service providers at a plurality of locations.

22. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein the automatically providing comprises determining in real-time the at least one available appointment.

23. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein the automatically providing comprises updating in real-time the at least one available appointment as unavailable in the event another user has selected the at least one available appointment.

24. (original) The method of claim 19, further comprising obtaining a nature of a problem of the product, and providing do-it-yourself repair information based on the nature of the problem.

25. (original) The method of claim 19, further comprising obtaining one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user.

26. (previously presented) The method of claim 25, further comprising notifying the service provider of the one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user.

27. (previously presented) The method of claim 25, further comprising setting one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user as unavailable for other users.

28. (currently amended) A system for enabling scheduling of a service call in a computing environment, said system comprising:

at least one processor adapted to obtain product information regarding a product from a user of the computing environment; and

said at least one processor adapted to:

validate product warranty service information of the product in real-time from a database including warranty service information based on at least one of the product information and customer information obtained from the user;

establish a priority order to a service call among a plurality of service calls based on the product warranty service information;

determine whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer of the product or a service provider different than the manufacturer;

~~provide to the user only references of service providers authorized to service or repair the product;~~

provide to the user, from whom the product information is obtained, at least one available appointment based on the priority order in real-time for scheduling a service call, wherein the at least one available appointment is based on the product information and on the determination made by said at least one processor, and said at least one processor adapted to provide the at least one available appointment based on a determination to display the at least one available appointment within a calendar schedule in real-time for scheduling the service call; and

provide to the user, prior to scheduling the service call, a price estimate that varies based on a regional location of the user for the service call without interaction between the user and any other human being.

29. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein the product information comprises a location of the product, and at least one of a product type, a product manufacturer, and a product model number, and wherein the at least one available appointment is based on the location of the product.

30. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein said at least one processor is adapted to select the at least one available appointment from at least one possible appointment for at least one service provider.

31. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein said at least one processor is adapted to select the at least one available appointment from a plurality of appointments, and wherein the plurality of appointments are associated with a plurality of service providers at a plurality of locations.

32. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein said at least one processor is adapted to determine in real-time the at least one available appointment.

33. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein said at least one processor is adapted to update in real-time the at least one available appointment as unavailable in the event another user has selected the at least one available appointment.

34. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein said at least one processor is adapted to provide suggested product information to the user for use by the user in providing the product information.

35. (original) The system of claim 34, wherein the suggested product information comprises at least one of a product type, a product manufacturer, and a product model number.

36. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein said at least one processor is adapted to provide to the user a suggested nature of a problem based on the product information.

37. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein said at least one processor is adapted to obtain one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user.

38. (previously presented) The system of claim 37, wherein said at least one processor is adapted to notify the service provider of the one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user.

39. (canceled)

40. (previously presented) The system of claim 37, wherein said at least one processor is adapted to set the one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user as unavailable for other users.

41. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein said at least one processor is adapted to validate warranty coverage for the product based on the product information.

42. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein said at least one processor is adapted to obtain a nature of a problem of the product, and to provide do-it-yourself repair information based on the nature of the problem.

43. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein said at least one processor is adapted to obtain the product information at a first computing unit from input of the product information by the user at a second computing unit coupled to the first computing unit via a communications network.

44. (original) The system of claim 43, wherein the communications network is a global computer network.

45. (previously presented) The system of claim 28, wherein the service call is for repair of a home appliance, the authorized service provider further comprising at least one of a service provider under an agreement with the manufacturer to provide service similar to factory service for coverage under warranty and a service provider satisfying requirements for becoming one authorized service provider for the product.

46. (currently amended) A system for enabling scheduling of a service call for repair of a home appliance in a computing environment, said system comprising:

means for obtaining product information regarding a product at a first computing unit from input of the product information by the user at a second computing unit coupled to the first computing unit via a communications network, wherein said first computing unit includes a web browser, is configured to determine whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer of the product or a service provider different than the manufacturer;

means for validating product warranty service information of the product in real-time from a database including warranty service information based on at least one of the product information and customer information obtained from the user;

means for establishing a priority order to a service call among a plurality of service calls based on the product warranty service information;

~~means for providing to the user only references of service providers authorized to service or repair the product;~~

means for providing from the first computing unit to the user that input the product information at the second computing unit at least one available appointment based on the priority order in real-time for scheduling a service call based on the product information and the determination made by said first computing unit, wherein the means for providing provides without interaction between the user and any other human being, and said means for providing provides the at least one available appointment based on a determination to display to the user the at least one available appointment within a calendar schedule in real-time for scheduling the service call; and

means for providing from the first computing unit to the user, prior to scheduling the service call, a price estimate that varies based on a regional location of the user for the service call without interaction between the user and any other human being.

47. (original) The system of claim 46, wherein the product information comprises a location of the product, and at least one of a product type, a product manufacturer, and a product model number, and wherein the at least one available appointment is based on the location of the product.

48. (original) The system of claim 46, further comprising means for selecting the at least one available appointment from a plurality of appointments, and wherein the plurality of appointments are associated with a plurality of service providers at a plurality of locations.

49. (original) The system of claim 46, wherein said means for providing comprises means for determining in real-time the at least one available appointment.

50. (original) The system of claim 46, wherein said means for providing comprises means for updating in real-time the at least one available appointment as unavailable in the event another user has selected the at least one available appointment.

51. (original) The system of claim 46, further comprising means for obtaining a nature of a problem of the product, and means for providing do-it-yourself repair information based on the nature of the problem.

52. (original) The system of claim 46, further comprising means for obtaining one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user.

53. (previously presented) The system of claim 52, further comprising means for notifying the service provider of the one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user.

54. (original) The system of claim 52, further comprising means for setting the one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user as unavailable for other users.

55. (currently amended) At least one program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying at least one program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method of enabling scheduling a service call, the method comprising:

obtaining product information regarding a product from a user;

validating product warranty service information of the product in real-time from a database including warranty service information based on at least one of the product information and customer information obtained from the user;

establishing a priority order to a service call among a plurality of service calls based on the product warranty service information;

determining, by the machine, whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer of the product or a service provider different than the manufacturer;

~~automatically providing to the user only references of service providers authorized to service or repair the product;~~

automatically providing to the user, from whom the product information is obtained, at least one available appointment based on the priority order in real-time for scheduling a service call based on the product information and said determination made by the machine, wherein said automatically providing includes providing without interaction between the user and any other human being, and said automatically providing includes providing based on a determination to display the at least one available appointment within a calendar schedule in real-time for scheduling the service call; and

automatically providing to the user, prior to scheduling the service call, a price estimate that varies based on a regional location of the user for the service call without interaction between the user and any other human being.

56. (original) The at least one program storage device of claim 55, wherein the product information comprises a location of the product, and at least one of a product type, a product manufacturer, and a product model number, and wherein the at least one available appointment is based on the location of the product.

57. (original) The at least one program storage device of claim 55, wherein the automatically providing comprises selecting the at least one available appointment from a plurality of appointments, and wherein the plurality of appointments are associated with a plurality of service providers at a plurality of locations.

58. (original) The at least one program storage device of claim 55, wherein the automatically providing comprises determining in real-time the at least one available appointment.

59. (previously presented) The at least one program storage device of claim 55, wherein the automatically providing comprises updating in real-time the at least one available appointment as unavailable in an event another user has selected the at least one available appointment.

60. (original) The at least one program storage device of claim 55, further comprising obtaining a nature of a problem of the product, and providing do-it-yourself repair information based on the nature of the problem.

61. (original) The at least one program storage device of claim 55, further comprising obtaining one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user.

62. (previously presented) The at least one program storage device of claim 61, further comprising notifying the service provider of the one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user.

63. (previously presented) The at least one program storage device of claim 61, further comprising setting one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user as unavailable for other users.

64. (currently amended) An article of manufacture comprising:

at least one computer usable medium having computer readable program code means embodied therein for causing a scheduling of a service call for repair of a home appliance, the computer readable program code means in said article of manufacture comprising:

computer readable program code means for causing a computer to obtain product information regarding a product at a first computing unit from input of the product information by the user at a second computing unit coupled to the first computing unit via a communications network;

computer readable program code means for causing a computer to determine whether the product is serviced by a manufacturer of the product or a service provider different than the manufacturer;

computer readable program code means for validating product warranty service information of the product in real-time from a database including warranty service information based on at least one of the product information and customer information obtained from the user;

computer readable program code means for establishing a priority order to a service call among a plurality of service calls by the first computing unit based on the product warranty service information;

~~computer readable program code means for automatically providing to the user only references of service providers authorized to service or repair the product;~~

computer readable program code means for causing a computer to provide from the first computing unit to the user that input the product information at the second computing unit at least one available appointment based on the priority order of the service call in real-time for scheduling a service call based on the product information and the determination made by the computer readable program code means for causing a computer to determine whether the product is serviced by the manufacturer of the product or the service provider different than the manufacturer, and said computer readable program code means for causing a computer to provide the at least one available appointment causes a computer to provide the at least one available appointment based on a determination to display the at least one available appointment within a calendar schedule in real-time for scheduling the service call; and

computer readable program code means for causing a computer to provide from the first computing unit to the user, prior to scheduling the service call, a price estimate that varies based on a regional location of the user for the service call without interaction between the user and any other human being.

65. (original) The article of manufacture of claim 64, wherein the product information comprises a location of the product, and at least one of a product type, a product manufacturer, and a product model number, and wherein the at least one available appointment is based on the location of the product.

66. (previously presented) The article of manufacture of claim 64, further comprising computer readable program code means for causing a computer to select the at least one available appointment from a plurality of appointments, and wherein the plurality of appointments are associated with a plurality of service providers at a plurality of locations.

67. (previously presented) The article of manufacture of claim 64, wherein said computer readable program code means for causing a computer to provide the at least one available appointment comprises computer readable program code means for causing a computer to determine in real-time the at least one available appointment.

68. (previously presented) The article of manufacture of claim 64, wherein said computer readable program code means for causing a computer to provide the at least one available appointment comprises computer readable program code means for causing a

computer to update in real-time the at least one available appointment as unavailable in an event another user has selected the at least one available appointment.

69. (original) The article of manufacture of claim 64, further comprising computer readable program code means for causing a computer to obtain a nature of a problem of the product, and computer readable program code means for causing a computer to provide do-it-yourself repair information based on the nature of the problem.

70. (original) The article of manufacture of claim 64, further comprising computer readable program code means for causing a computer to obtain one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user.

71. (previously presented) The article of manufacture of claim 70, further comprising computer readable program code means for causing a computer to notify the service provider of the one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user.

72. (original) The article of manufacture of claim 70, further comprising computer readable program code means for causing a computer to set the one of the at least one available appointment selected by the user as unavailable for other users.

73. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said determining whether the product is serviced comprises determining whether the product is serviced by an authorized service provider if the product is not serviced by the manufacturer, the authorized service provider having agreed with the manufacturer to provide a service similar to that provided by the manufacturer.

74. (previously presented) The method of claim 19, wherein said determining whether the product is serviced comprises determining whether the product is serviced by an authorized service provider if the product is not serviced by the manufacturer, the authorized service provider having agreed with the manufacturer to provide a service similar to that provided by the manufacturer.

75. (previously presented) The system of claim 28, wherein to determine whether the product is serviced said at least one processor is adapted to determine whether the product is serviced by an authorized service provider if the product is not serviced by the manufacturer, and the authorized service provider has agreed with the manufacturer to provide a service similar to that provided by the manufacturer.

76-78. (canceled)

79. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing a priority to the service call if the product is out of warranty, wherein said providing a priority includes providing the priority to the service call over a service call corresponding to a product that is under warranty.

80. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one available appointment includes at least two available appointments, said method further comprising providing a number of the at least two available appointments if the product is out of warranty, wherein said providing a number includes providing the at least two available appointments that are higher in number than a number of at least one available appointment corresponding to a product under warranty.

81. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing, via the first computing unit, a reminder of the service call to the user, wherein said providing a reminder of the service call to the user includes providing the reminder before a time at which the service call is scheduled.

82. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising selecting, via a graphical user interface, a portion of the calendar schedule for scheduling a service call.

83. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising prioritizing, by the first computing unit, a problem associated with the product upon determining that the product has encountered the problem.

84. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

determining, by the first computing unit, a procedure for fixing a problem associated with the product; and

displaying, by the first computing unit, the procedure to the user.

85. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

determining, by the first computing unit, whether the product is covered by a first warranty; and

offering, by the first computing unit to the user, a second warranty upon determining that the product is not covered by the first warranty.